

Discussion of Possible Handbook Language Related to Program Closure

August 2014

Overview of this Report

This is an update on the Commission's unit accreditation system as it relates to program approval and the development of possible Handbook Language related to closing a program. .

Staff Recommendation

This item is being presented for discussion and guidance regarding the Commission's ability to close a specific program at an institution.

Background

A discussion was held at the June 2014 COA meeting regarding concerns that the Commission's current accreditation system may not adequately review or place sanctions on individual programs and may not have the ability to close specific program(s) at an institution. Currently, California's Education Code §44374 (d) specifies that the COA makes a single accreditation decision for an institution and all of its educator preparation programs.

- (d) The Committee on Accreditation shall make a single decision to accredit, to accredit with stipulations, or to deny accreditation to an institution's credential programs, pursuant to Section 44373 and the accreditation framework.*

During the June COA meeting the question was posed "***Can the Commission require an institution to close a specific educator preparation program under the current accreditation system?***" To date, if a program is found not to meet one or more of the Commission's program standards, a team report states this finding. The COA may place specific stipulations on the institution with the goal of monitoring the program for improvement such as requiring periodic reporting or not allowing additional candidates to enroll in the program.

Discussion

Following the June COA meeting, the question remained whether the action of closing a specific program within an institution was within the Commission's purview. This was discussed with the Commission's legal staff who informally agreed that this option would be consistent with Education Code §44374 (d).

Understanding that closure may be an option, this item is being brought back to the members of the COA for further discussion about the type of conditions or criteria that would guide site visit teams when considering the closure of a specific program within an institution

Development of Criteria for Considering Program Closure

Given the above definitions, it would be important for the COA to discuss possible criteria or guidance that teams can use to recommend closure of a program and that COA can refer to in order to ensure that decisions are consistent across institutions. The following are provided for discussion purposes and are not meant to be comprehensive in nature:

Under what circumstances could a team recommend closure of a program? Examples could include:

- *At least half of the standards are not being met*
- *The quality of education is severely hampered such that there can be no assurance that candidates are completing the program with the required knowledge, skills and abilities required of the credential*
- *The program's assessments are not linked in any way to program standard requirements*
- *The organization structure of the program is in such disarray that it significantly hampers the services offered to a candidate*
- *Several preconditions have not been met*
- *Outcomes data indicate that the program is of low quality*

The exact list of guiding conditions or criteria could be developed after COA discussion.

It may be helpful to consider the definitions that were developed by COA and included in the *Accreditation Handbook* specifying the criteria used for accreditation decisions of *Accreditation with Stipulations*, *Accreditation with Major Stipulations*, *Accreditation with Probationary Status* and *Denial of Accreditation*: These are included for reference in Appendix A. The purpose of developing this language was to ensure that, once all standard findings were determined, an overarching determination of the seriousness of any issues that were identified could be examined in totality to determine the most appropriate accreditation status. Likewise, to ensure consistency of reviews, recommendations from teams, and ultimately, decisions by COA to require closure of a program, staff believes that some form of similar guidance would be helpful to the process.

Next Steps

Based on COA discussion at this meeting, staff will bring back another agenda item reflecting the COA's discussion for further consideration. Draft language for adoption by the COA and inclusion in the *Accreditation Handbook* may also be appropriate.

Appendix A
Accreditation Handbook Language
Definitions for Accreditation Status

<i>Accreditation with Stipulations</i>	The recommendation of <i>Accreditation with Stipulations</i> means that the accreditation team, at the site visit, verified that the institution and some of its programs have “not met” or “met with concerns” some common standards and/or program standards, applicable to the institution, and that action is required to address these deficiencies. The institution is judged to be generally effective in preparing educators and in its general operations apart from the identified areas of concern. The concerns or problems identified are confined to specific issues that minimally impact the quality of the program received by candidates or completers.
<i>Accreditation with Major Stipulations</i>	The recommendation of <i>Accreditation with Major Stipulations</i> means that the accreditation team concluded that the institution and some of its programs have “not met” or “met with concerns” multiple standards in the common standards, and/or program standards applicable to the institution, or that the team found areas of concern (such as matters of curriculum, field experience, or candidate competence) that impact, or are likely to impact, the preparation of credential program candidates. The team identified issues that impinge on the ability of the institution to deliver high quality, effective programs. The review team may have found that some of the institution’s credential programs are of high quality and are effective in preparing educators or that the general operations of the institution are adequate, but the team concluded that these areas of quality do not outweigh the identified areas of concern.
<i>Accreditation with Probationary Status</i>	The recommendation of <i>Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations</i> indicates that an accreditation team identified serious and pervasive deficiencies in the institution’s implementation of the Common Standards and program standards applicable to the institution, or that the team found areas of concern (such as matters of curriculum, field experience, or candidate competence) that substantially impact the preparation of credential program candidates. The team identified issues that prevent the institution from delivering high quality, effective programs. The review team may have found that some of the institution’s credential programs are effective in preparing educators and/or that its general operations are adequate, but the team determined that these areas of quality clearly do not outweigh the identified areas of concern.

<i>Denial of Accreditation</i>	<p>The COA would deny accreditation only if an accreditation team, upon conducting a revisit to an institution that received major or probationary stipulations, finds that the stipulations have not been adequately addressed or remediated, or determines that significant and sufficient progress has not been made towards addressing the stipulations. If an accreditation team finds that: (a) sufficient progress has been made, and/or (b) special circumstances described by the institution justify a delay, the COA may, if requested by the institution, permit an additional period of time for the institution to remedy its severe deficiencies. If the COA votes to deny accreditation, all credential programs must close at the end of the semester or quarter in which the decision has taken place. In addition, the institution's institutional approval ceases to be valid at that time and the institution will no longer be a CTC approved program sponsor.</p>
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